

involving an ultra-light caught in heavy winds over the island). In some ways, one of the least sensational and comprehensive documentaries would have to be the dual BBC/Nova works released in 1988 and 1989, dated though they are. When documentaries focus on specific rather than general subjects, the result is often more apprehensible and insightful and even palatable: Laura Jean Boyd's *Caballo Loco on Easter Island* (about the plight of horses and cows stricken by eating toxic plants), *The Undersea World of Easter Island* (by the ORCA Dive Shop — with stunning aquatic footage in the “blue hole” that is Easter Island's ocean home), and the two Te Pito Productions films, *Casino Free Rapa Nui* and *Being Rapanui* come to mind (the latter, despite obvious political agendas, nevertheless provide unique local perspectives). Still, even with documentaries shot as recently as 2007 (an atrocious Travel Channel film comes to mind), it's tough to escape the lunatic fringe (think David Childress or Erich von Däniken, for example).

It is thus with great pleasure that I can announce and recommend Denise Ducaud's documentary, *The Pride of Being Rapanui*. In Spanish with English subtitles, this production covers themes like “Memories”, “The First Airplane”, “Life Today”, “Music”, and “Pride” and features a series of interviews by islanders representing a cross-section of the population. Musician Manu Haoa talks about helping children to learn to dance and sing; herbalist Isabel Veri Veri discusses plants for medicinal and other uses; sculptor Bene Tuki relates how sometimes he doesn't want to sell his carvings because he becomes too attached to them (he also tells the story of how, as a child, he ran from an airplane, thinking it was a bird that was going to eat him!); craftswoman Merina Manumatoma conveys a quaint tale about sneaking into the “cinema” hidden under her mother's large coat and recalls a neighbor with the only TV on the island (a 14" black & white model). Other interviewees include singer/songwriter Maria Teresa Ika; craftswomen Mafra Muñoz Rapu and Patricia Riroroko; surfer and tour guide Nicolas Yancovic Pakarati; Explora guide Uri Avaka Teao; dive shop owner Mike Rapu; and student / sportsman Aku Icka. All of these presentations are passionate and humanistic and create an accurate portrayal of the people and by extension the life of the Rapanui. One criticism I had in the choice of material, however, is an interview with craftswoman Noemi Pakarati who displays and talks about her petroglyph rubbings — a practice strongly discouraged today. And, while it's good to see she's not wearing shoes while walking on the petroglyphs, it's bad that she's walking on them in the first place.

The lighting and sound are crisp, vibrant, sophisticated, and professional, revealing the island in all its colorful glory, and the transitions between segments and musical and vocal accompaniment is evocative and appropriate. Not that *The Pride of Being Rapanui* lacks defects. The first European visit is erroneously referred to as occurring in 1772 instead of 1722, an early population figure of 9,000 is mentioned without a shred of qualification despite the lack of consensus or definitive knowledge about this, and cannibalism is described as happening without any skepticism in light of the fact that no

reliable archaeological evidence of this practice has been discovered on Easter Island to date. (Admittedly, later in the documentary, one of the interviewees describes the Rapanui as survivors who will do so by any means necessary, including eating others, so maybe this is a moot point; *ahem*.) And that erroneous 111 population figure rears its ugly head again, as if to validate the notion that there's no such thing as a flawless Easter Island *anything*. (At the same time, one must acknowledge the wise observation of the renowned Tucson psychiatrist John Racy who once said “Perfect is the enemy of the sane”.) But these are minor points. The only major issue to which I take exception is the jingoistic last sequence in which islanders with a straight face assert that they are nicer, more cordial, and more welcoming than the “contis” (continentals; Chileans) — statements that, even if accepted as the biased generalities they are barely escapes the realm of bigotry. I am not ignorant of, nor insensitive to, the issues involving Chileans on Easter Island but such statements do a disservice to what I would like to believe are the less prejudiced inhabitants of the island who would be hard-pressed to agree with one interviewee's assertion that the Rapanui “don't know how to hate”. Sorry, but no humans have a monopoly on this, however much one may wish it to be true. Rapanui are humans and humans know how to hate.

But philosophical disagreements aside, *The Pride of Being Rapanui* is for the most part a clear, gentle voice set against the clouds, the sun, and the wind of the island. Whether one agrees with the assessments of those being interviewed or not, there is an undeniable importance to this documentary in that it embodies the faithful transmission of culture and language and therefore preserves these vital elements for all to see and know. Just as living on Easter Island is unique, just as Easter Island itself is unique, so is this documentary. Unlike far too many other documentaries out there, if you get a chance to see this one, you won't regret it.

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## NEW EXHIBITION IN PARIS: RAPA NUI, L'ÎLE DE PÂQUES

Espace Fondation EDF  
6, rue Récamier 75008 Paris

### *Review by Paul Bahn*

Hot on the heels of their major exhibition at the Louise Leiris Gallery in Paris in the Summer of 2008, which not only launched their huge book on the collections of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, but also presented most of the objects from that collection (see *Rapa Nui Journal* 22[2]:144-145, October 2008), the tireless Orliacs produced a second Easter Island exhibition in Paris. Running from November 20, 2008 to March 1, 2009, this show presented virtually all of the objects from the island which are to be found in France, both in museums and in private collections.



Photo by Michel & Catherine Orliac.

The exhibition was sponsored by the Fondation EDF Diversiterre (an offshoot of the French Electricity Company), which aims to highlight the diversity of cultures and environments, in association with the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle and the Chilean Embassy in France, as well as a number of partners in the media.

The material was presented on three floors. On entering, one was confronted by a 4 m (13 ft.) replica *moai* made of polystyrene; this formed the centrepiece of the ground floor, and gaps between the displays ensured that it was constantly visible. This part of the exhibition set the scene, introducing the visitor to the location of the island, to Polynesian navigation, the fauna and flora of Rapa Nui, and what happened to its environment. The upper floor was where the real treasures were to be found — a breathtaking array of wooden sculptures of different kinds, as well as feather work, including a remarkable feather headpiece from a very obscure French provincial museum (in Pithiviers). Of particular interest were the traces of skilled repairs carried out on some objects (notably *reimiro*) by the islanders.

Finally, in the basement, one found a mock-up of Pierre Loti's cabin on the *Flore*, based on his drawings, and with the original objects he had acquired arranged in their original positions — including a remarkable *mata'a* hafted onto a 2 m (6 ft.) long piece of palm rachis. Loti's original drawings were also to be seen throughout the exhibition.

In a second room the famous Echancrée *rongorongo* tablet, on loan from the Tahiti Museum, was displayed, and in a third room one could watch three films: a short made by Catherine Orliac about the rescue of the Toromiro; another by Michel Orliac about how earth ovens are used; but above all, the remarkable black & white film of the Lavachery/Métraux expedition, which is a fascinating glimpse of the island and its occupants (including the lepers) in the 1930s, as well as the laborious methods used to remove a *moai* from its *ahu* to the ship.

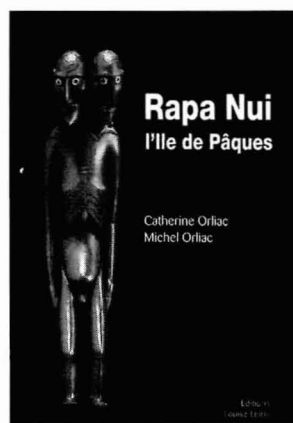
In some places, computers enabled one to investigate some objects in tremendous detail — hence one could turn

images of the unique two-headed *moai kavakava* (from the Natural History Museum of La Rochelle) in any direction, and zoom in on its details; on another, one could do the same with *rongorongo* glyphs.

This Winter exhibition was an enormous success — it is not every day that one can see rows of giant posters about an Easter Island exhibition plastered through entire métro stations in Paris! At the time of writing (mid-February) the show had already received more than 40,000 visitors, and often had lines of people stretching way down the street. It was also well covered by newspaper and magazine articles all over the world. To mark the occasion, the Editions Louise Leiris issued a splendid 128-page catalogue\* featuring more than a hundred illustrations — a worthy companion to the two Orliac volumes published earlier the previous year, and containing equally beautiful photographs of the exhibits. Thus, at a stroke in 2008, the Orliacs greatly extended the book collection of any Rapanuiphile, with three publications of outstanding beauty — certainly the finest works ever devoted to the art of Easter Island.

\* *Rapa Nui, L'Île de Pâques* - Catherine & Michel Orliac - Editions Louise Leiris, 2008; hardcover, 30 € [\$38].

**Editor's note:** In conjunction with this latest Louise Leiris publication, another Easter Island book was published proximate to the Paris exhibition — *Regards Sur L'Île de Pâques* by Micheline Pelletier (Editions GB Conseils, 2008). Perfect-bound in a 9"×12" (23×30 cm) format, its 68 pages are filled with beautiful color photos and, at press time, this book sells for 10 € [\$13].



## PUBLICATIONS

Barnes, Shawn S. & Roger C. Green

"From Tongan Meeting House to Samoan Chapel: A Recent Tongan Origin for the Samoan Fale Āfolau - *Journal of Pacific History* 43(1):23-49 (2008)

Bellows, Keith

"Easter Island, Chile" in *Don't Go There!* by Peter Greenberg - Rodale, 2009

Bettocchi, Lorena

"La Banque de Donnees rongorongo de Monseigneur Tepano Jaussen" - *Tahiti-Pacifique* 19(213):38-43 (2009)

Bettocchi, Lorena

"Les Pierres de l'Île de Pâques Gravées d'Écritures" - *Tahiti Pacifique* 18(202):30-34 (2008)